

EPA 2017 HURRICANE RESPONSE

TALKING POINTS:

Deliberative Process / Ex. 5

BACKGROUND:

HEC Hurricane Response Hearing: On November 14, 2017, Region 4 Administrator Pete Lopez, along with Region 4 RA Trey Glenn and Region 6 Acting RA Sam Coleman, testified on the agency's response to Hurricanes Harvey, Irma and Maria at a hearing held by the House Energy & Commerce Committee, Subcommittee on the Environment.

Region 2 Hurricane response activities:

- Continued **emergency response support** to FEMA, the Corps of Engineers, and the governments of Puerto Rico and the USVI, with over 400 agency staff working on the response in PR and the USVI.
- Work continues on **debris removal, vessel recovery and disposal, and assuring safe drinking water and wastewater services.**
- EPA issued a number of **No Action Assurances** and granted some "Force Majeure" claims for relief from Consent Decree obligations for mobile non-road generators and pumps used for emergency purposes; to allows the sale, distribution and use of heating oil and marine fuel designated for use in Emission Control Areas in the Caribbean. EPA also approved facility requests for extensions of the limit on accumulation of hazardous waste on-site.
- The Navy is the lead federal response agency at the Vieques, Puerto Rico Superfund site.

Region 4 Hurricane response activities:

- Region 4 **assessed vulnerabilities** at all sites in Florida prior to landfall. Teams were deployed to conduct assessments at all NPL sites within FL, AL, GA and SC to document operating conditions and to verify that there were no releases from the sites and—where necessary—take any further actions to protect health and the environment.
- Worked with Headquarters to issue **12 fuel waivers** and no action assurances to multiple states to help stabilize gas prices and ensure that emergency vehicles had access to fuel.
- Coordinated with Florida to monitor the status of community **drinking water and wastewater systems.**
- Hazard Assessment Teams performed field assessments at more than 200 **chemical and oil storage facilities.** Minimal reports of oil and hazardous substances.
- **Orphan container collections, Vessel recovery, landfill inspections.**

Region 6 Hurricane response activities:

- Region 6 worked collaboratively with Texas and local officials to assess drinking water and waste water systems; retrieve loose containers and, according to FEMA, safely dispose of over 20 million cubic yards of debris. At one point, TCEQ had approximately 500 people and EPA had over 250 people assisting in response to this natural disaster.
- **Flood Water:** Water quality sampling focused on industrial facilities and hazardous waste sites.
- **Superfund Sites:** All 43 Superfund NPL sites in the affected area were assessed. Post-hurricane summaries and quality assured data reports data are available on EPA's website. At the **San Jacinto River Waste Pits** site, repairs to add armored rock to the cap was completed shortly after the sampling was conducted. EPA has posted quality assured data collected by the potentially responsible parties. EPA and TCEQ completed assessments of all state Superfund sites in the affected area.
- **Debris Management, Reconnaissance/Orphan Containers:** TCEQ oversight.
- **Air Quality Monitoring:** In addition to monitoring stations, which were temporarily shut down, EPA sent aerial surveillance aircraft to conduct a screening level assessment to evaluate unreported or undetected releases from facilities with Risk Management and/or Response Plans within the hurricane impacted areas and found no exceedances of the Texas comparison values.
- **Refineries/Fuel Waivers:** EPA approved waivers for fuels in Texas to help address emergency circumstances as well as enforcement discretion for petroleum distribution facilities, gasoline storage facilities and bulk fuel terminals that had been impacted or damaged.
- **Arkema Plant Fire:** As a result of initial chemical fires while the facility was flooded, EPA collected downstream surface water runoff samples at locations outside the evacuation zone, near residential areas. EPA also sent its aerial surveillance aircraft to test resulting smoke from the fires at the plant. EPA completed its response support to the local fire department and Fire Marshal's Office.